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ABSTRACT

This set of discussion guides includes units on "Racism and Race Relations"; "Sexual Harassment"; and "Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians." Each guide presents a brief introduction to the issue and suggestions for ways to discuss both personal attitudes and public policy. Cases, examples, questions, and a range of views serve as starting points for discussions. The package also includes a booklet that offers suggestions for organizing and leading discussion programs. The guides are part of a series that seeks to promote informed, thoughtful dialogue among groups of individuals concerning issues of diversity. (SG)

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The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides

—Suggestions for Informal Conversations

- Racism and Race Relations
- Sexual Harassment
- Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians

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STUDY CIRCLES RESOURCE CENTER

A program of the Study Circles Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide:

Racism and Race Relations

Suggestions for informal conversations

A program of the Study Circles Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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Additional copies of *The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Racism and Race Relations* are available for $.50 each. Contact the Study Circles Resource Center if your organization or corporation would like information on sponsoring distribution of these booklets.

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Racism and Race Relations is an abbreviated version of *Can't We All Just Get Along? A Manual for Discussion Programs on Racism and Race Relations*, available for $3 from the Study Circles Resource Center.

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Publications of SCRC include topical discussion programs; training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and an annotated bibliography on study circles, collaborative learning, and participatory democracy. Many of these publications are available at no charge. Write or call for more information:

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Introduction

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide is brief because it's not just for reading - it's for *using*. It presents a number of different ways to discuss racism and race relations, and encourages you to consider a range of ideas and views. You can use it in broad-ranging discussions or in discussions that are oriented toward action.

This Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide is designed to help you have more productive conversations on one of the most difficult issues our nation faces. We hope that you will share the ideas in this booklet with friends, neighbors, and acquaintances; co-workers; members of your church, synagogue, or mosque; and other members of organizations to which you belong. You can use these ideas either in an organized discussion group or in a more informal setting - for example, over lunch at work, during your commute, over dinner, or after watching a news show with friends and family.

After a very brief background piece on the issue, this guide offers concrete suggestions for your conversations about race relations. It ends with some general ideas on how discussions on any issue can be more productive.

Why talk?

Talking through issues with others is one way to become involved in the events of the day, to be more than a passive consumer of the news. The premise of this guide is that dialogue is a necessary first step for coming to terms with the problems we face as a society, and that everyone can take part in this constructive dialogue. There are a few basic ingredients that make productive discussion more likely - respectful listening, open exploration of the experiences and beliefs behind our opinions, and careful consideration of the views of others.

Why talk about racism and race relations?

Racism and relations among racial and ethnic groups present critical problems in our society. Americans care deeply about these issues and have a lot to say about them. As we share our experiences and ideas with others, new ideas for solving our problems will emerge. But dialogue not only helps us find a solution - it is, itself,

part of the solution. This is true of all public issues, but especially of race relations.

The only way we will get along better is for people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds to talk openly and respectfully with each other. Though conversation will help us realize that our differences are not so great, open communication on the sensitive subject of race can be difficult.

But we must begin somewhere. Perhaps at first you'll feel more comfortable talking with people from a background similar to your own, but we hope this will be a starting point for getting to know people of other backgrounds and cultures.

Transforming race relations in this country will require the participation of many Americans in this kind of discussion. As citizens come together to discuss their experiences and concerns, they are working toward understanding and trust among people of different racial and ethnic groups. This guide is intended to help you be part of this important dialogue.

Background on the issue: Stalled progress on race relations

In recent years, some people have been saying that race relations are getting worse. The three days of riots in Los Angeles in the spring of 1992 seemed to confirm these fears, and brought the issue of race back to the top of the nation's agenda. The acquittal of four white police officers who were videotaped as they beat Rodney King - and the riots that followed - astonished and outraged many Americans. The acquittal led many people to wonder just how much progress we have made on race relations in this country.

Throughout our history, we have struggled toward equality for all races and ethnic groups. Although racism exists in other nations, it is perhaps more significant in the U.S. because racial and ethnic lines frequently parallel socioeconomic lines. Also, racism has played a key role in our history. The wars against Native American tribes, the enslavement of Africans, and discrimination against immigrants were all based on the belief that some peoples were inferior.

In the 1960s, we made significant progress toward racial equality. The civil rights movement gave many Americans hope that justice and greater racial harmony were possible. Now people seem less hopeful about relations among racial and ethnic groups. There is tension not only between whites and blacks, but among other groups as well. Many people think that the economic recession has fueled these tensions.

Meanwhile, the racial and ethnic makeup of our society has been changing. A large wave of Latino and Asian immigration began in the 1980s. In some western states, whites may be a minority within a generation or two. By the year 2000, one in three Americans will be a person of color.

While we have made progress, we still have a long way to go. In *The Souls of Black Folk*, written at the beginning of this century, the African-American writer W.E.B. DuBois said, "The problem of the Twentieth Century is the problem of the color line." Our lack of progress throughout the century is captured in the title of a recent book by Andrew Hacker: *Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal*. Clearly race remains a central and unresolved issue in American life.

Suggestions for discussions on four aspects of race relations

■ ■ ■ Sharing personal background, experiences, and perceptions ■ ■ ■

To learn from each other's views, we first must learn about each other's experiences. The following questions offer some ways to talk about your own experiences, to learn about the experiences of others, and to understand how your particular background relates to your beliefs and perceptions.

- What has your racial, ethnic, or cultural background contributed to your attitudes about race relations?
- What experiences have contributed to your attitudes?
- In what ways do your attitudes toward persons of other racial or ethnic groups differ from those of your parents?
- Where have you seen discrimination or racism in practice?
- You probably have heard expressions of prejudice from family members, friends, co-workers, or neighbors. Why do you think they express these thoughts and feelings?
- Why do many Americans feel uncomfortable talking candidly about racism and race relations? What is most difficult about this subject?

■ ■ ■ Discussing the nature of the problem ■ ■ ■

There is a general sense that our problems with race relations are growing, but there is no consensus on the nature of the problem. This section offers alternative views as a way to begin talking about what kind of problem we face. The views can be a starting place for discussing the state of race relations in your community or the state of race relations throughout the nation as a whole.

The four alternative viewpoints reflect the opinions of citizens and leaders from across the political spectrum. They're not the only views, and they're not necessarily mutually exclusive of one another, but they are a starting point for talking through ideas. Using them will help ensure that different views receive a fair hearing. Following the viewpoints are a few questions to help you consider and discuss them.

Viewpoint 1 – Racism remains a potent force.

Racism is pervasive and powerful in America, harming African-Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, Asians, and, less directly, whites. Discrimination on the basis of race deprives many Americans of a good education, good jobs, promotions, decent housing, and access to credit. For example, even when black men have the same level of education, they earn far less than white men. This kind of discrimination hurts minorities in terms of economic opportunity, social status, and self-esteem.

Viewpoint 2 – Minorities still suffer from past oppression.

Even though discrimination has declined significantly over the past 25 years, some minorities continue to be held back by a history of poverty and oppression, and by expectations of failure. African-Americans, in particular, have a horrible legacy - that of 200 years of slavery and 100 years of oppression after the Civil War. It is unrealistic to expect any culture to overcome such oppression in a generation or two. Other groups, particularly Native Americans, have also suffered oppression that is difficult to overcome.

Viewpoint 3 – A declining economy is the main problem for poor minorities.

African-Americans and Latinos do have a harder time making it than whites did, but this is not due to racism and discrimination. It is because there are fewer economic opportunities today for those on the bottom rungs of the economic ladder. Over the past 20 years, our economy has lost the unskilled jobs that once sustained the working poor and the manufacturing jobs that once lifted poor people into the middle class. As a result, the minority groups of today do not have the economic opportunities that the Italians, Irish, Jews, Poles, and other ethnic groups enjoyed.

Viewpoint 4 – Dysfunctional cultures are the main problem for poor minorities.

Racism no longer holds back minorities as it once did. The evidence is a thriving black middle class and the success of Asians, of some Hispanic groups, and of foreign-born blacks. Racism has become a crippling fixation; the sense of victimization has isolated and weakened the African-American community in particular. Many of the problems of poor minorities are due to a dysfunctional culture of poverty that fails to emphasize education and hard work. In addition, the welfare system discourages initiative and has led to a growing number of families headed by single mothers. Crime, violence, and drugs have become part of the culture of poverty, and in many poor minority neighborhoods survival is a basic challenge.

Some questions for weighing and discussing the four viewpoints

- What experiences, beliefs, and values might lead a reasonable person to support each view?
- What do you find most persuasive or bothersome about each view?
- What points of agreement are there between your views and those of others in the discussion?
- Are there viewpoints not represented here, or perhaps a combination of these viewpoints, that you think best define our problems with race relations?

■ ■ ■ Discussing what can be done in your community ■ ■ ■

The list of possible action steps presented in this section provides some ideas for improving racial and ethnic relations where you are – in circles of family and friends, in the workplace, in schools, and in the larger community. The list comes from ideas implemented in various communities around the United States.

Possible steps for community action on race relations

- Form an intentionally integrated neighborhood group, both for socializing and for understanding one another's perspectives on current social issues.
- Start a "church pairing," in which a church of predominantly one racial or ethnic group works with a church of another racial or ethnic group; or, pair a synagogue with a church. The pairs work together on issues of common concern while learning about each other's backgrounds and experiences.
- Recruit high school students from diverse racial and ethnic groups within a school system for after-school peer-tutoring or community service programs.
- Promote open discussion of racial and ethnic issues within the classroom at all grade levels.
- Recommend freshman orientation sessions at colleges and universities that include discussions on race relations.
- Sponsor trainings for employees to assist them in learning how to better work with colleagues who are from different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
- Speak out against the evidence of racism in the community, via vigils, rallies, teach-ins, or letters to the editor of the local paper.
- Recruit racially and ethnically diverse members for all kinds of membership organizations. Then, make diversity a priority when nominating members to leadership positions.

Talking about what can be done in your community

- Which of these actions are pertinent for addressing the current problems in our own community?
- What are the most important events in the history of our school, organization, neighborhood, or in the community as a whole that have had an impact on racial and ethnic relations? How can our understanding of these events make our current efforts more effective?
- What efforts are currently underway in our community? How can we build on these efforts?
- What other groups and individuals in this community or outside the community might support us as we act on these ideas?

Resources for taking action

Domestic Sister Churches: Pairing Congregations of Different Racial/ Ethnic Backgrounds, a 24-page guide including stories and practical advice, is available for $4.50 from Baptist Peace Fellowship, 499 Patterson St., Memphis, TN 38111.

For information on a community service program that brings together high school students from diverse backgrounds, contact Common Ground, 250 Constitution Plaza, Hartford, CT 06103.

Teaching Tolerance provides teachers with resources for promoting interracial and intercultural understanding in the classroom. The materials are offered at low or no cost. Contact: Sara Bullard, Teaching Tolerance, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

For information on developing community responses to racist incidents, contact the Southern Poverty Law Center, Klanwatch Project, 400 Washington Ave., Montgomery, AL 36104.

■ ■ ■ Discussing what can be done at the national level ■ ■ ■

This section offers some possible steps that we as a nation might take to improve racial and ethnic relations. Some of these call for specific policies, while others call for public leaders (elected officials and others) to use their influence. Still other steps reflect a belief that the best way to address race relations at the national level is to address other problems, such as the economy or crime. Following these national-level steps are some questions that will help you consider and discuss them.

Possible steps for national action on race relations

- Better enforce and/or strengthen civil rights laws.
- Begin a public education campaign that stresses the importance of learning to get along; speak out clearly against instances of bigotry and discrimination.
- Start education and job training programs for poor communities, many of which are made up primarily of racial and ethnic minorities.
- Support affirmative action programs. Educate as to their fairness and necessity.
- Dismantle affirmative action programs; they're unfair and increase resentment and tension among the races.
- Revitalize the economy so that there will be more opportunities for those who are struggling economically, many of whom are members of minority communities.
- Encourage each minority community to unite, pool its resources, take advantage of opportunities for self-help, and stress education and hard work.
- Fight crime, for the most basic "opportunity" we could provide our young people in poor minority communities is the opportunity to grow up in an environment free of drugs and violence.

- Improve schools in poor communities. Public schools in most of the United States remain racially segregated and unequal in terms of the educational opportunities they provide.

Some ways to consider the possible steps

- Which of these steps should we pursue?
- Which steps deserve top priority? How do our priorities reflect our beliefs about the nature of the problem?
- What will these steps cost? Are they worth it?
- What proposals would you add to the list?

Ground rules for useful discussions

This section offers some brief suggestions for useful discussions about social and political issues. Some people say that, in this age of television and busy lives, our conversation skills leave something to be desired. Still, the art of conversation can be revived with practice.

Whether you are talking with close friends or casual acquaintances, effective communication requires that you respect others and take their ideas seriously - even when you think they're dead wrong.

Talk about public issues can bring out strong emotions, because many of our beliefs are a large part of how we identify ourselves. You can respect another's feelings without necessarily agreeing with the conclusions that person has come to.

There are no sure-fire rules, but applying some basic principles will make your conversations more productive, satisfying, and enjoyable. Though many of these ground rules seem commonsensical, we all know that in practice they are not so commonly applied!

- Listen carefully to others. Try to really understand what they are saying and respond to it, especially when their ideas differ from your own. Try to avoid building your own arguments in your head while others are talking.
- Think together about what you want to get out of your conversation.
- Be open to changing your mind; this will help you really listen to others' views.
- When disagreement occurs, keep talking. Explore the disagreement. Search for the common concerns beneath the surface. Above all, be civil.
- Value one another's experiences, and think about how they have contributed to your thinking.

- Help to develop one another's ideas. Listen carefully and ask clarifying questions.
- Don't waste time arguing about points of fact; for the time being, you may need to agree to disagree and then move on. You might want to check out the facts before your next conversation.
- Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.

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The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Racism and Race Relations is designed to help you have more productive conversations on one of the most difficult issues our nation faces. It can be read quickly and discussed whenever you have the opportunity to talk. It is balanced in its presentation of ideas, and offers suggestions for discussing several aspects of race relations.

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), producer of this Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide, is a project of Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. SCRC carries out this mission by promoting the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.

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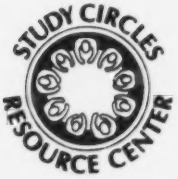

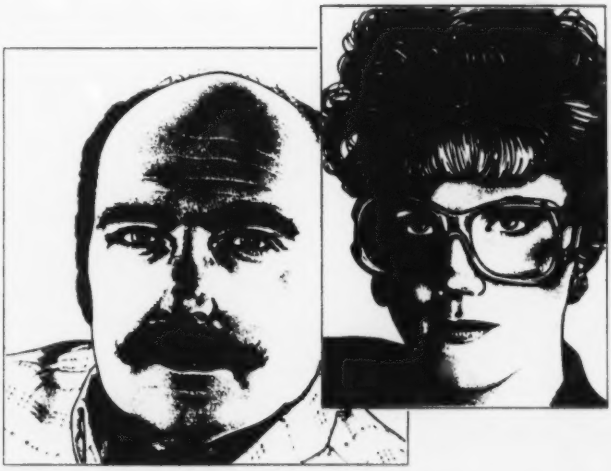

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide:

Sexual Harassment

—Suggestions for Informal Conversations

A program of the Study Circles Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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Additional copies of *The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Sexual Harassment* are available for $.50 each. Or, you are welcome to photocopy it. Contact the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) if your organization or corporation would like information on sponsoring distribution of this booklet or SCRC's Busy Citizen's Guide on racism and race relations.

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide

This Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide offers suggestions for conversations about an issue that is the subject of much national debate. Its purpose is to help you use dialogue to better understand the legal definition of sexual harassment and to clarify and develop your own and others' definitions of acceptable behavior between men and women in the workplace, on campus, or wherever people gather.

What is sexual harassment?

Though sexual harassment is much talked about, it is little understood. The legal definition is based on guidelines first established by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) in 1980:

> *Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when: (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.*

Even though this definition seems straightforward on a first reading, interpretation of individual cases can be difficult. Each situation must be examined on its own merits. In cases in which sexual favors are asked for in exchange for a promotion or a job benefit, sexual harassment clearly exists. The question becomes more difficult in these "*quid pro quo*" cases when the exchange is implied rather than made explicit. There is also disagreement surrounding claims that certain behaviors have created an offensive, hostile work environment; harassment of this type may come from peers, subordinates, or superiors. Even more questions arise as campuses struggle to adapt this EEOC definition to their unique circumstances.

Usually when people talk about sexual harassment, they talk about a man harassing a woman. It is important to note that harassers may be male or female, and may be of the same or different sex

as the victim. According to several surveys, about 40 percent of women report having experienced sexual harassment, compared to about 15 percent of men.

What good will it do to talk about it?

An essential part of dealing with sexual harassment is to understand what it is. Understanding will come in part from a wider distribution of information. But an even greater understanding will come from a frank dialogue in which men and women can openly and respectfully explore each other's ideas, perceptions, and experiences.

Once people can recognize when sexual harassment is taking place, they can take steps to prevent it, stop it, or get help in dealing with it. An awareness of the issue helps people to know their rights and empowers them to articulate what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Also, an understanding of sexual harassment will increase sensitivity to the feelings of others and knowledge of how to act appropriately. When people do experience sexual harassment, they will have a better understanding of the personal, legal, and institutional avenues that are available to them.

Most business and educational institutions have focused their efforts on the legalities surrounding sexual harassment. In some states, laws require companies of certain sizes to post notices about the illegality of sexual harassment and about grievance procedures that exist for those who are experiencing it. But most employers and school administrators recognize that publicizing and enforcing the law are only part of the answer. Sexual harassment is a problem of human relations that calls for communication. It harms individuals and lowers the ability of people to work together effectively. If people who work together can better understand each other's feelings and attitudes, they will get along better and the general atmosphere in the workplace and on campus will improve.

Also, dialogue about sexual harassment will help people deal with changes happening in society at large, in workplaces, and in schools. Women are joining the work force in larger numbers, are more frequently entering professions that were previously dominated by men, and many hold higher positions than they did in the past.

Many people are questioning and reexamining work relations and male-female interactions which used to be taken for granted.

Talking about sexual harassment can be difficult because the issues tap into complex emotions and cultural conditioning. At times the issue raises traumatic incidents that people may never have felt able to talk about. Even though debates about sexual harassment do not always fall along male-female lines, open communication on this issue can provide an opportunity for men and women to bridge some of the most pervasive divisions in our society.

Using this guide

Parts I and II are the core of this guide. They contain specific frameworks and questions to use as guides for your discussions. Following the core material is a brief informational piece on sexual harassment and a list of additional resources. Since any discussion will be more productive if those who participate agree to ground rules, on page 16 we present a set of commonly advocated ground rules for productive discussion.

Share this booklet with friends, neighbors, and acquaintances; co-workers, fellow students and teachers; members of your church, synagogue, or mosque; and other members of organizations to which you belong. You are welcome to photocopy it. We hope that you will use this guide in ways that suit your particular circumstances, as you explore the various personal, social, and political dimensions of sexual harassment. You can use these ideas in an organized discussion group or in a more informal setting - for example, over lunch at work, during your commute, over dinner, or after watching a news show with friends and family.

Part I – Sharing attitudes, experiences, and perceptions

Talking about hypothetical cases is one way to reexamine your attitudes, experiences, and perceptions in light of what you and others have experienced and thought. Following the cases are questions to help you talk about them.

Some cases to consider

1. A woman is attending training seminars that will enable her to take a management position. After she declines to have sex with her supervisor, he tells her that she is not qualified to continue with the management training.

2. A boss gives his secretary roses during secretary's week and leaves a note for her that says she is more important to him than his wife.

3. A female supervisor repeatedly invites a male employee to dinner at her home.

4. A male supervisor decides not to promote a female employee because he is afraid she will be sexually harassed by the all-male team she would be working with in her new position.

5. A male supervisor calls a male employee a "pansy" and makes exaggerated, mimicking gestures behind his back to other employees.

6. A woman wears a tight-fitting dress to the office, and a male co-worker tells her she looks "sexy."

7. A group of female and male engineers tell explicitly sexual jokes to each other and have for a number of years. One woman is offended but has never said anything.

8. A male supervisor initiates a sexual relationship with a female employee. They continue this relationship for a long period of time, and then she ends it. During the next year, she begins to receive negative job reviews.

9. A customer at a restaurant tells a waitress that he will pay her tuition for college if she spends some weekends with him.

10. In a warehouse, the corridor walls to the bathrooms are covered with pictures of nude women.

11. A male supervisor puts his hand on the shoulder of a woman employee whenever he talks with her.

12. A female supervisor expects her young assistant to escort her on numerous evening outings in order to conduct business over dinner, and over dinner makes sexual innuendos.

13. The male department chair in a university invites a new female graduate student to lunch to discuss the future direction of her coursework. He spends most of the lunchtime conversation asking her about her personal life.

14. A male college professor is known for making sexual jokes in class, though he never makes this kind of remark to students outside of class.

15. A male college professor calls his male students by name but refers to female students as "honey."

16. A female college professor has warned a borderline student that unless he gets more serious about his work she will have to fail him. Halfway through the semester, she sees him at a local pub, buys him a drink, and tells him that she is sexually attracted to him.

Questions for considering the cases

- Is this sexual harassment, according to the law? Is this offensive behavior, though it may not be against the law? Is this acceptable behavior? What additional information would you need in order to decide?

- If others in your discussion have differing opinions on a particular case, can you understand why your interpretations are different?

- Do any of your own experiences affect the way you feel and think about the cases? Talk about your own experiences if you wish to. (No one should be obliged to talk about his or her experiences.)

- Do you think differently about harassment that is malicious as opposed to harassment that is based on ignorance or carelessness?

- How would your conclusion about the cases differ if the person taking the action were not in a position of authority?

- Can words or behaviors perceived as harassment from one person be seen as acceptable from another?

- Does there have to be a pattern of behavior to establish sexual harassment?

Part II – Talking about sexual harassment's relationship to the larger society

Discussions of sexual harassment often lead to discussions about society in general. The wide variety of ideas that come out reflect differences in peoples' personal backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. Differences of opinion cut across lines of gender, political affiliation, occupation, and income. Sexual harassment raises so many emotionally charged issues of personal identity, responsibility, freedom, and the desire for community that it raises internal conflicts in many people.

Below are four typical ways in which people view sexual harassment. Some parts of these views may overlap with one another, but each view provides a different emphasis in understanding the nature of the issue. Each is written in the voice of someone who might hold that view. Use the views as a discussion starter by taking turns putting yourselves in the place of a possible supporter of each view. This will provide a way to clarify your own thinking and to explore the differences and similarities between your thinking and that of others.

The views

1. Sexual harassment is primarily about the abuse of power. According to this view, the issue is not primarily about male-female relationships but about coercion and intimidation. Even though some cases may be difficult to interpret, recognizing that sexual harassment is primarily a power issue brings it into clearer focus. We must stress that relationships in the workplace and in schools are not the same as social relationships. They include elements of power and authority that make intimidation possible. When there is a power inequity, it can be very difficult for someone to reject sexual advances. Unlike social settings, there is not the freedom to walk away from a work or school situation without the possibility of having to pay for it either

emotionally or economically. Also because of the inequity in power, there is fear of reprisal for reporting harassment. Education about sexual harassment should emphasize this aspect of it, and grievance procedures should be sensitive to it.

2. Sexual harassment primarily reflects women's second-class status in our society. According to this view, society still silently condones the second-class treatment of women, in spite of gains that women have made in legal protections and in professional standing. The inequality of women is one way that women and men are divided in our society, and it affects the ability of everyone to work together. Women are often portrayed as objects to be used for men's purposes, and that is why there is so much violence against women and why discrimination and sexual harassment are so prevalent. Until sexism is treated seriously, sexual harassment will be tolerated. According to this view, laws that prohibit sexual harassment are necessary but are not likely to get at the root of the problem. Society needs to confront its deeply ingrained sexism. Until our culture values women as equals, sexual harassment will be part of the continuum of violence against women.

3. Most sexual harassment reflects a confusion over how to define appropriate behavior during a time of transition in men's and women's roles. According to this view, it makes sense that discussions of sexual harassment often lead to discussions of larger questions about our society. The roles of men and women, the differences between men and women, and how men and women should behave toward each other are all in a state of flux. Sexual harassment is an important problem, but that should not obscure the fact that there are many well-meaning people trying to find their way in relationships. Our society has made great strides in winning equality for women, both under the law and in social arrangements, but learning how to relate to one another in these new roles takes time. There will always be complexities in relationships between men and women, but we make a mistake to lump these complexities with "harassment." To do so hinders people from understanding sexual harassment, lessens the impact of harassment charges, and makes it more difficult to work out new kinds of relationships.

Both men and women must be sensitive to communicating openly and respectfully about each other's perceptions within the context of each relationship.

4. The real meaning of sexual harassment is becoming distorted by those who label as "harassment" almost anything that is sexual. According to this view, our society is diverting attention from the real problem of sexual harassment by looking suspiciously at almost any form of sexual talk or behavior. This comes from a basic mistrust of all men that is based on some men's offensive behavior. In cases in which someone in a position of authority over someone else causes that person physical, economic, or psychological harm, we should treat sexual harassment as a serious offense. People who hold this view contend that the women's movement may have gone too far in promoting the idea that much of men's behavior is sexist and even harassment. This has harmed relations between men and women, and skews our definitions of sexual harassment. For example, to include speech that may cause unpleasantness in our definitions of sexual harassment, we open the door to limits on free speech and unreasonably act as though women are helpless victims. According to this view, courts should concentrate on the sexual harassment claims that have real substance, but not obscure the issue by so broadening the definition that it becomes meaningless. We should make a distinction between sexual harassment and irritating or tasteless innuendos.

Questions for considering the views

- Which view, or combination of views, comes closest to your own? Do you think that sexual harassment is an important problem in our society? What do you think is at the heart of the problem?

- Do we need to pay more or less attention to sexual harassment?

- How do different views of the problem lead to different ideas about what we as a society should do about it?

- What can be done to change attitudes that foster or condone sexual harassment?

- Beyond their legal responsibility, do businesses and schools have a social responsibility to educate employees, faculty, and students about sexual harassment?

- Can different standards of behavior, depending upon whether one is relating to someone of the same sex or the other, be acceptable? Are different standards conducive to relationships based on mutual respect? Or is this just another "separate but equal" distinction that divides and polarizes rather than unites?

Some background on the issue: Sexual harassment as a personal, social, and political issue

Sexual harassment is not new, but our society is paying more attention to it than ever before. Over the past 30 years, it has moved from being viewed as a "personal matter" to being viewed as an issue deserving of public concern.

Though there is public concern, there is also a great deal of confusion about what it is, what we should do about it, and what it means for how men and women should relate to each in our changing culture. Those who experience sexual harassment often feel shame, fear, anger, low self-esteem, and discouragement long past the period of time in which the harassment takes place. Many women have stories about their experiences with sexual harassment in workplaces and schools. Some men have experienced sexual harassment as well. For both women and men sexual harassment is hurtful and may bring old experiences into new awareness. Since the issue so often meshes with male-female relations, there is a lot of room for miscommunication about a problem that is large in scope.

The redefinition of men's and women's roles in our culture and laws against sex discrimination set the stage for society's increased attention to sexual harassment. In the latter part of the 1960s, inspired in part by the civil rights movement, women began to reconsider the traditional limitations on their lives, in particular the stereotypical ways in which they were viewed as "sex objects." Many women demanded that education, hiring, and promotion decisions be made on the basis of qualifications rather than on the basis of gender. Many women also began to demand equal and fair treatment in the workplace. It was with this backdrop that sexual harassment became recognized as particular form of gender discrimination.

Sexual harassment is illegal, but recognition of it as a crime is relatively recent. Even after the passage of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (which prohibits discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, color, religion, national origin, or sex) it took several years for the courts to identify sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination. For many years, judges ruled that what is now

defined as sexual harassment was a normal part of workplace relationships.

In 1980, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission first defined sexual harassment as a form of unlawful, sex-based discrimination, and it established guidelines for clarifying it. In 1984, the EEOC expanded the scope of its guidelines to educational institutions. Campuses are faced with the task of adapting the guidelines to a context that is different in many ways from the workplace. (Title IX of the 1972 Higher Education Amendments outlaws sex discrimination in educational institutions receiving federal assistance.) In 1986, the Supreme Court upheld the EEOC's interpretation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. The Civil Rights Act of 1991 allows victims of sexual harassment to recover awards for compensatory and punitive damages.

In addition to legal changes that have made the problem more visible, charges of sexual harassment in prominent places have involved the public in the debate over the issue. The October 1991 Senate confirmation hearings for then-nominated Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas brought sexual harassment to a new level of public attention. Anita Hill's story to the confirmation committee of being sexually harassed by Thomas, when he was Director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) and her immediate supervisor, riveted the nation. During the hearings and directly after the confirmation of Thomas, there was a national outpouring of discussions on sexual harassment. Debates, arguments, conversations, and embarrassed joking about sexual harassment continue to take place throughout our society.

Regardless of peoples' beliefs about the guilt or innocence of Thomas, recognition of the problem of sexual harassment grew as a result of the hearings. In the last quarter of 1991, immediately following the Thomas hearings, the EEOC's sexual harassment caseload increased 71%. Since Anita Hill's testimony, other allegations of sexual harassment have been front-page news. At the end of 1992, sexual harassment charges brought against Senator Bob Packwood of Oregon, a stalwart supporter of women's issues, fueled the national debate. The number of federal court cases involving sexual harassment has skyrocketed. Many businesses, trade unions, government agencies, and universities are adopting or revising sexual

harassment policies and complaint procedures, as well as setting up trainings for their employees.

With legal protections, people are more apt to speak up when they feel they have been victims of sexual harassment, but even with legal protections many still fear the repercussions of speaking out. There is still much confusion in society about the nature of sexual harassment, and most people - men and women - find it difficult to talk about in a way that helps to clarify the issue. This booklet is intended as a tool for those seeking understanding.

Additional resources on sexual harassment

Organizations

Business and Professional Women/USA
2012 Massachusetts Ave., NW
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 293-1100

Information clearinghouse on sexual harassment. Refers callers to local chapters nationwide.

Equal Rights Advocates
1663 Mission St., Suite 550
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 621-0505

Provides initial information and legal advice, and will refer to groups nationwide. Provides counseling and advice in Spanish and English.

The National Council for Research on Women
Sara Delano Roosevelt Memorial House
47-49 East 65 Street
New York, NY 10021
(212) 570-5001 or FAX (212) 570-5380

Guides on organizing speakouts and forums on sexual harassment. Also available: *Sexual Harassment: Research and Resources, A Report-in-Progress.*

9 to 5, National Association of Working Women
614 Superior Avenue NW
Cleveland, OH 44115
(216) 566-9308

9 to 5 hotline: (800) 522-0925. A toll-free service. Advises women on sexual harassment and other job-related problems.

Books

You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation, by Deborah Tannen, Ph.D. Ballantine Books, New York, 1990.

A very readable account of complexities of communication between men and women due to different conversation styles. A useful help for conversation, and a good discussion starter itself.

The 9 to 5 Guide to Combatting Sexual Harassment, by Ellen Bravo and Ellen Cassedy. John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1992.

Provides general information on sexual harassment followed by advice for managers, employers, and unions, as well as victims and other concerned individuals. Also includes a resource list.

Sexual Harassment: Confrontations and Decisions, edited by Edmund Wall. Prometheus Books, Buffalo, New York, 1992.

This collection of articles examines a variety of perspectives in the sexual harassment debate. Readable articles explore the definition and causes of sexual harassment both in the university and the workplace. A section on "Legal Responses" explores court cases and legal arguments.

Ground rules for useful discussions

This section offers some brief suggestions for useful discussions about social and political issues. Some people say that, in this age of television and busy lives, our conversation skills leave something to be desired. Still, the art of conversation can be revived with practice.

Whether you are talking with close friends or casual acquaintances, effective communication requires that you respect others and take their ideas seriously – even when you think they're dead wrong.

Talk about public issues can bring out strong emotions, because many of our beliefs are a large part of how we identify ourselves. You can respect another's feelings without necessarily agreeing with the conclusions that person has come to.

There are no sure-fire rules, but applying some basic principles will make your conversations more productive, satisfying, and enjoyable. Though many of these ground rules seem commonsensical, we all know that in practice they are not so commonly applied!

- Listen carefully to others. Try to really understand what they are saying and respond to it, especially when their ideas differ from your own. Try to avoid building your own arguments in your head while others are talking.

- Think together about what you want to get out of your conversations.

- Be open to changing your mind; this will help you really listen to others' views.

- When disagreement occurs, keep talking. Explore the disagreement. Search for the common concerns beneath the surface. Above all, be civil.

- Value one another's experiences, and think about how they have contributed to your thinking.

- Help to develop one another's ideas. Listen carefully and ask clarifying questions.

- Don't waste time arguing about points of fact; for the time being, you may need to agree to disagree and then move on. You might want to check out the facts before your next conversation.

- Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.

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The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Sexual Harassment is designed to help you have more productive conversations about a difficult issue whose scope has recently become more apparent. This booklet can be read quickly and discussed whenever you have the opportunity to talk. It is balanced in its presentation of ideas, and offers suggestions for discussing different aspects of the problem.

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), producer of this Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide, is a project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a private, nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. SCRC carries out this mission by promoting the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.

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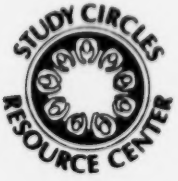

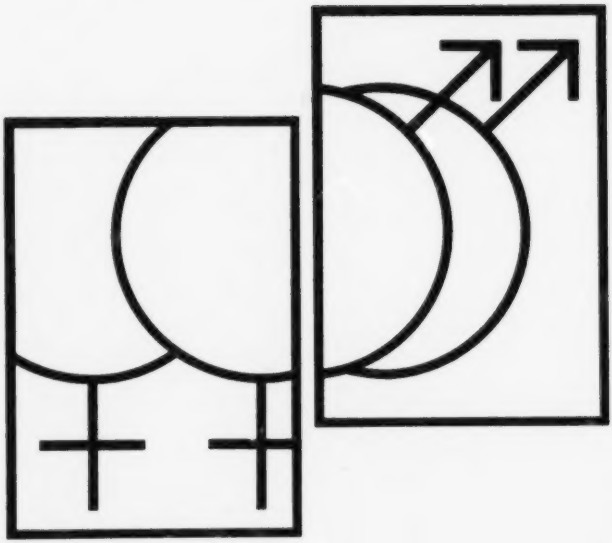

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide:

Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians

—Suggestions for Informal Conversations

A program of the Study Circles Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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Additional copies of *The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians* are available for $.50 each. Or, you are welcome to photocopy the booklet. Contact the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) if your organization or corporation would like information on sponsoring distribution of this booklet or SCRC's Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides on race relations and sexual harassment. Another booklet, *Organizing and Leading a Busy Citizen's Study Circle* is also available.

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Publications of SCRC include topical discussion programs; training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and an annotated bibliography on study circles, collaborative learning, and participatory democracy. Many of these publications are available at no charge. Write or call for more information:

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Introduction

This Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide is brief because it's not just for reading – it's for *using*. It's designed to help you have productive discussions about an issue that has disturbed many Americans: How should our society regard homosexuality, and specifically, what legal rights should gay people have? (Homosexuals are often referred to as "gay people," "gay men and lesbian women," or "gays and lesbians.")

We encourage you to share this booklet and discuss this issue with friends, family members, neighbors, and acquaintances; coworkers or classmates; people in your church, synagogue, or religious group; and members of other organizations to which you belong. You can use this booklet either for an organized discussion group or in an informal setting – for example, over lunch at work, during your commute, after watching a news show with your family, or with a few friends who have come over for coffee and conversation.

Why talk about homosexuality and civil rights for gay people?

As a result of ballot initiatives in Colorado, Oregon, and Portland, Maine in 1992, and the national debate over gays in the military in 1993, civil rights for gays and lesbians has become a major national issue. "Gay rights" has become the battleground for debates about family values, the place of religion in politics, and other social issues. Many people expect gay rights to be the "abortion issue of the '90s." In the beginning of 1993 *The Denver Post* reported that " . . . activists in at least 12 states have now signaled plans for . . . campaigns against gay rights, confirming claims from both sides of the Colorado controversy that a national movement has begun."

Though it has gained prominence as an issue, many people find gay rights a difficult subject for discussion. For some, it arouses intense emotions. Some are uncomfortable because it touches on sexuality. We talk about sexuality – if at all – only with those we are closest to and feel most comfortable with.

But there can be significant personal rewards from a discussion about gay rights. We can seek answers to our questions, learn more about the issue, share our own opinions, and consider the views and feelings of others. We may be exposed to some new ideas. Discussion provides us with an opportunity to re-evaluate and better understand our own beliefs.

Our society will also benefit from discussion of this issue. An absence of dialogue has led to polarization and political battles that resolve nothing. Though disagreements over this issue will continue, respectful disagreement will make the public debate more constructive.

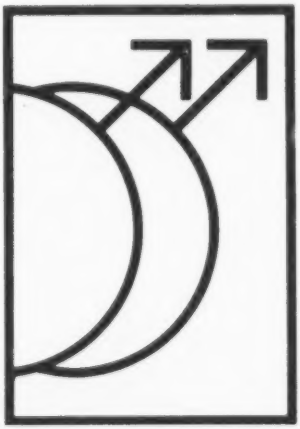
This booklet frames the discussion as a civil rights issue, since the public debate has focused on what legal protections gay people should have. Specifically, should civil rights laws that outlaw discrimination in housing and employment on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, gender, marital status, and disability be extended to ban discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation? (Some identify the term "civil rights" with the "civil rights movement," the struggle by blacks to gain equality. By using the term "civil rights" here, we do not intend to take a position on the issue of whether civil rights for gays should be equated with civil rights for blacks.)

Using this guide

Parts I and II of this booklet offer two approaches for your discussion. Part I provides some ideas for sharing experiences, thoughts, values, feelings, and questions in an open, non-adversarial way. Part II focuses on the public policy question of civil rights for gays and lesbians: What legal protections should our society provide? To help you consider a range of views in your conversation, it offers four alternative answers that span the political spectrum. The background information starting on page 10 provides some facts and clarifies some of the debates surrounding this issue.

A final note

Everyone who has an open mind can benefit from constructive dialogue. But there are a few basic ingredients that make a discussion more likely to be useful and enjoyable – respectful listening, an effort to understand why others feel as they do, and a willingness to share the experiences, beliefs and values that shape our own opinions. Even if no agreement emerges, dialogue itself helps to resolve problems by enabling people to better understand each other. (The section beginning on page 15 of this guide further elaborates on ideas for useful discussion.)



Part I – Sharing experiences, perceptions, and values

The first step in learning from the views of others is to learn about their experiences, beliefs, and values. Before talking about civil rights for gays, we suggest that you spend some time discussing your perceptions and thinking about homosexuality.

The level of personal experiences you discuss will depend upon the level of familiarity in your group. Please keep in mind that the discussion is not a group therapy session, especially if you use this guide in a structured discussion group. Nobody should be asked, or feel compelled, to talk about their sexuality and sexual experiences.

The following questions offer opportunities to communicate your thinking and perceptions about gays and lesbians, and to share some of the experiences through which you developed your ideas.

Questions for discussion

- What experiences have shaped your attitudes about homosexuality and gay people?
- Do your attitudes toward gay people differ from your parents' or siblings' attitudes? If so, why do you suppose you have different ideas than the people you grew up with?
- How did you first find out about homosexuals?
- Have your feelings and ideas about gay people changed over time? If so, how and why?
- Have your religious traditions or beliefs contributed to your attitudes about homosexuality? If so, how?

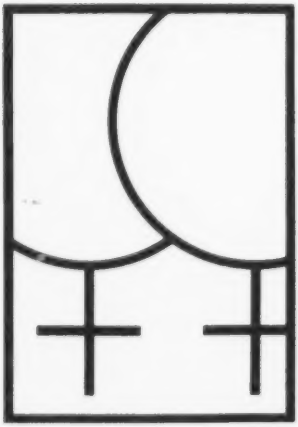
• Why do many people find homosexuality an awkward and difficult topic to discuss? What do you find most difficult in talking about this subject?

• Have you ever seen discrimination against or harassment of gay people? If so, what occurred?

• Some commentators say there is a difference in the way that people react to gay men as opposed to lesbians. Do you agree? If so, what do you think accounts for the different reactions?

• Aside from their sexual preferences, how do you think gay women and men differ from other people?

• What do you think it's like to be gay in our society?



Part II – Civil rights for gays and lesbians: What legal protections should we provide?

Below are four viewpoints that reflect the opinions of citizens and leaders from across the political spectrum. Some parts of the viewpoints may overlap with one another, but each provides a distinctive way of approaching the question of civil rights for gays and lesbians; each viewpoint uses the strongest claims of its supporters.

We suggest that you use the viewpoints as a discussion starter by putting yourself in the place of a possible supporter of each viewpoint. This will help to clarify your own views and to explore the differences and similarities between your thinking and that of others.

The following questions will help to focus your discussion of the viewpoints:

- What experiences, beliefs, and values might lead people who think of themselves as decent and caring to support each of these four viewpoints?

- What do you find most persuasive about each view? What do you find most disturbing?

- Are there important viewpoints not represented here? What are they?

- What are the points of agreement between your own view and the views of others in your discussion?

Viewpoint 1 – Gays deserve no legal protection from discrimination on the basis of their sexual preference.

Supporters of this view argue that society should do nothing to condone homosexual behavior, since homosexuality is immoral, unnatural, and perverse. Even though homosexuals, like anyone else in our society, deserve protection from harassment and violence, we should not give them special legal protection when they are discriminated against because of their sexual preference. This is different from other kinds of "discrimination," because our society *should* distinguish between right and wrong. Civil rights laws should not protect people from being discriminated against because of their own immoral behavior. In fact, tolerance for homosexuality undermines the moral fabric of our society and has contributed to the breakdown of family life. Government should not interfere with individuals and institutions who want to protect themselves from the influence of gays. Nobody should be forced to hire or to rent an apartment to a gay person. Children should be protected from the influence of homosexuals, and schools should be able to fire or not hire gay or lesbian teachers and coaches. Adoptions and foster care by gays should not be permitted.

Viewpoint 2 – Gays deserve protection from discrimination in housing and in most employment situations. However, gays should not have full civil rights. Individuals and organizations should have the right to deny gays jobs in which they would work with children.

Supporters of this viewpoint argue for some civil rights for gays, but express disquiet about the impact that gay role models may have on children. They believe that sexual preference is not biologically determined, and that it can be affected by one's childhood experiences. They argue that, in the interest of strengthening the family, society should take steps to reduce the risk that children will become homosexual. The family is the

moral foundation and basic building-block of society: a gay couple is not a solid base on which to build a strong society. Therefore, we should not abolish all legal distinctions between homosexuals and heterosexuals. In certain situations – such as a job that involves working with children – institutions and individuals should be allowed to deny gays employment. Supporters of this view might disagree about where to draw the line – for example, whether openly gay people should be allowed in the military. But they agree with the principle that there are some jobs in which it is justifiable to discriminate against a person on the basis of his or her sexual preference.

Viewpoint 3 – We should extend civil rights laws so that they fully protect gay individuals from discrimination in any type of employment and in housing. But gay couples in committed relationships should not be granted the same rights that married, heterosexual couples receive.

Advocates of this view say it is unjust and it should be illegal to fire gay individuals from their jobs, deny them promotions, or refuse to rent to them simply because of their sexual orientation. This is just as true for gay people who work with children since, supporters say, gay role models do not make it more likely that a child will become homosexual. There is increasing evidence that sexual orientation is biologically determined. Furthermore, there is no correlation between the sexual orientation of parents and that of their children: the same percentage of children of heterosexual parents grow up to be gay as do children of gay parents. However, supporters of this view do not believe that homosexuality and heterosexuality are morally equivalent. They believe that sexual relations with a person of the same sex is wrong, and that gay couples are less likely to form stable, healthy families. Therefore, gay and lesbian couples, even those in committed relationships, should not have the same rights in marriage and parenthood that married heterosexual couples enjoy.

Viewpoint 4 – Gay individuals should have full civil rights. Gay couples in long-term, committed relationships should have the same rights as married, heterosexual couples. They should be able to marry, adopt children, and be foster parents.

Supporters of this view say that gay rights is the last frontier in the 200-year-old civil-rights struggle in America. They believe that gays and lesbians who demand their rights are following in the footsteps of women, blacks, people with disabilities, and others who had to fight to be treated as full citizens. For example, the same arguments – almost word-for-word – that were used 45 years ago against integrating blacks into the military have been used to support the ban on gays. When people are discriminated against because they belong to a specific group, there must be laws to protect members of that group. Even though some people believe that homosexuality is immoral, that is not a reason to treat gay people as second-class citizens. Besides, advocates of this viewpoint argue, there is nothing immoral or unnatural about homosexuality. Consenting adults should enjoy the freedom to experience their sexuality without legal penalties. Gay couples should have the same opportunities to nurture healthy families as do heterosexual couples. Since marriage, adoption, and foster care are primarily legal and economic institutions in our society, not religious ones, gays should have full rights in all of them.

Background on the issue: The public debate over gay rights

Over the past 25 years, the gay rights movement has advanced the visibility and status of gays and lesbians in our society. Many Americans have become more accepting of homosexuality and have come to understand that homosexuals, just like heterosexuals, should not be stereotyped – they are a diverse group in terms of race, ethnicity, occupation, and background. Two members of the U.S. Congress, Barney Frank and Gerry Studds, have announced that they are gay, and there are growing numbers of openly lesbian and gay politicians in state and local governments. Other public figures ranging from artists to business leaders have "come out of the closet."

However, the vast majority of gay people do not reveal that they are gay. Indeed, many keep it a secret, even from some friends and family members. This is contrary to the perception of some that most gays are "militant" and want everyone to know about their sexuality. Many gays fear losing opportunities for promotion, or even their jobs, as well as the respect of their peers and family members. In some parts of the country, and in some institutions, gays face harassment, open hostility, and even violence.

What does the law say about discrimination against gays?

To understand the concerns of gay people, it is helpful to realize that it is legal to discriminate against a person or a group unless the law specifically prohibits it. For example, it is legal to refuse to rent an apartment to someone for many reasons – because they have red, brown, or blonde hair; because they have a pet; because they drink too much fruit juice, milk, or alcohol; or because you just don't like the way they look. But it is illegal to refuse to rent to someone because, for example, he or she is black or Jewish, or uses a wheelchair. Federal laws ban discrimination in housing on the basis of race, color, religion, national

origin, gender, marital and family status, and disability. Some states have added other categories.

The debate over civil rights for gays and lesbians has focused on whether homosexuals should be protected from discrimination along with the groups mentioned above. In most states there are no laws which protect gay people from discrimination because of their sexual orientation. As of March 1993, seven states and more than 110 cities do have civil rights laws that protect gays from discrimination in housing and employment. Churches, synagogues, and other religious institutions are exempt from gay rights laws pertaining to employment. In addition, many gay rights laws include exceptions for roommate selection and for owners who live in one part of their two-family house and are selecting renters for the other part.

The political battle

Supporters of gay rights have used the political process effectively. Their current agenda includes passing more gay rights laws, ending the ban on gays in the military, repealing state sodomy laws, and passing domestic partnership legislation. (A number of cities have "domestic partner laws," which extend economic benefits such as health insurance to unmarried couples, whether gay or straight, who are in long-term, committed relationships.)

In the past few years, an organized opposition has pushed to prevent or repeal laws that protect homosexuals from discrimination. During 1992, civil rights for gays and lesbians moved to the center of the national stage. The ballot questions in Colorado, Oregon, and Portland, Maine produced bruising campaigns that received extensive national media attention, and President-elect Clinton promised to end the ban on gays in the military.

The Colorado question was the only one to pass, partly because its language was confusing, but also because supporters used the slogan, "No special rights," and argued that gays were pushing for the same "special rights and quotas" as "true minorities." The question read: "Shall there be an amendment . . . to prohibit the state of Colorado and any of its political subdivisions

from adopting or enforcing any law or policy which provides that homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation, conduct, or relationships constitutes or entitles a person to claim any minority or protected status, quota preference, or discrimination?"

The Oregon initiative was bolder. The words, "homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism, and masochism" were used three times. For example: "State, regional, and local governments . . . including . . . the public schools, shall assist in setting a standard for Oregon's youth that recognizes homosexuality, pedophilia, sadism and masochism as abnormal, wrong, unnatural, and perverse and that these behaviors are to be discouraged and avoided."

The constitutionality of anti-gay rights initiatives is at question. In January 1993, a state judge in Denver blocked Colorado from enforcing the measure that voters had approved until he could decide in a trial whether the law violated the federal or state constitution.

President Clinton's announcement that the ban on gays in the military would be ended generated high-level resistance, both in the military and in Congress. The debate on gay rights dominated the national news for several weeks. Both sides' arguments received considerable publicity, so we will not repeat them here. Since this is another critical aspect of gay rights that will benefit from dialogue, we urge you to think of productive ways to discuss it.

A few prominent issues in the debate about gay rights

Are people born gay or do they become gay? This is central because of concern over gays as role models for children. There is no definite answer to the question of what causes sexual orientation. Though scientific research has found evidence of a biological basis for sexual orientation, much disagreement on interpretations of the research remains.

Are gays more likely to sexually molest children than are heterosexuals? Some organizations that oppose gay rights claim that homosexuals are more likely to engage in sex with minors than are heterosexuals. While it is difficult to gather credible evidence about this assertion, the link between child molestation

and homosexuality is frequently raised because of well-publicized cases. The vast majority of child molesters are heterosexual men; 97% of known sex offenders against children are male, and 90% of the victims are female. There is no conclusive evidence either way on the question of whether homosexuality is linked to an increased likelihood of child molestation.

What percentage of the population is gay? We have seen many different numbers, ranging from two to ten percent. Most studies conclude that gays are between five and ten percent of the population.

Is homosexuality an illness? Are gays unhappy? The American Psychiatric Association does not consider homosexuality an illness. Being gay has little effect on personality as measured by standardized tests. Lesbian and gay adults who have come to terms with their sexual orientation are no more psychologically disturbed than are heterosexuals. However, many gay youth have a hard time, perhaps because of peer pressure and the absence of visible, healthy role models. Gay youth are two to three times more likely to attempt suicide than other young people and comprise up to 30% of youth suicides each year.

Religious perspectives

There are many religious perspectives on homosexuality. Some religious leaders point to passages from the Bible such as, "And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed abomination: they shall surely be put to death" (Leviticus 20:12). In addition to considering homosexuality wrong, some people believe that the "gay lifestyle" undermines the moral strength of our society. This may reflect a belief that gays are more likely to be promiscuous and to engage in deviant sexual behaviors than are heterosexuals. Taken together, these beliefs are often used to support the point of view that homosexuals should not receive full civil rights.

On the other hand, there are many religious organizations and leaders who actively support civil rights for gays and lesbians. Some offer this support because they believe there is nothing

morally wrong with homosexuality, arguing that the Bible should be interpreted in the context of the culture of the time in which it was written. In fact, there are denominations that openly embrace gay men and women as religious leaders. Still other religious leaders offer support for civil rights for gays not because they think homosexuality is moral but because they don't see morality as the issue. They argue that even though one may disapprove of homosexuality, it would be wrong to limit gays' legal rights. They say our system separates church and state for a good reason.

There are also religious distinctions that are important to some people for spiritual reasons but which may have no clear application to a person's views on civil rights for gays. For example, the Catholic Church distinguishes between homosexual *orientation*, which it does not consider sinful because it is not freely chosen, and homosexual *behavior*, which it does consider a sin, but only because any sexual (genital) activity outside of marriage – homosexual or heterosexual – is sinful.

Is there any common ground?

From what we see on the T.V. news or in the newspaper, we might think that most Americans have strong and certain ideas about gay rights. We usually hear only from advocates at opposite poles. Most Americans, however, are somewhere in between. They are uncomfortable with homosexuality, and have been so consistently. But they also overwhelmingly oppose discrimination against gay people in employment and housing, at least in principle. In specific situations – such as in schools – that support weakens considerably.

Clearly this is a complex issue that will continue to provoke debate in our society. We hope that as you participate in discussion and dialogue, and act in the public arena in support of your beliefs, you will help make the public debate on this issue a more constructive one.

Ground rules for useful discussions

This section offers some brief suggestions for useful discussions about social and political issues.

Whether you are talking with close friends or casual acquaintances, effective communication requires that you respect others and take their ideas seriously – even when you think they're dead wrong.

Talk about public issues can bring out strong emotions, because many of our beliefs are a large part of how we identify ourselves. You can respect another's feelings without necessarily agreeing with the conclusions that person has come to.

There are no sure-fire rules, but applying some basic principles will make your conversations more productive, satisfying, and enjoyable. Though many of these ground rules seem commonsensical, we all know that in practice they are not so commonly applied!

- Listen carefully to others. Try to really understand what they are saying and respond to it, especially when their ideas differ from your own. Try to avoid building your own arguments in your head while others are talking.

- Think together about what you want to get out of your conversations.

- Be open to changing your mind; this will help you really listen to others' views.

- When disagreement occurs, keep talking. Explore the disagreement. Search for the common concerns beneath the surface. Above all, be civil.

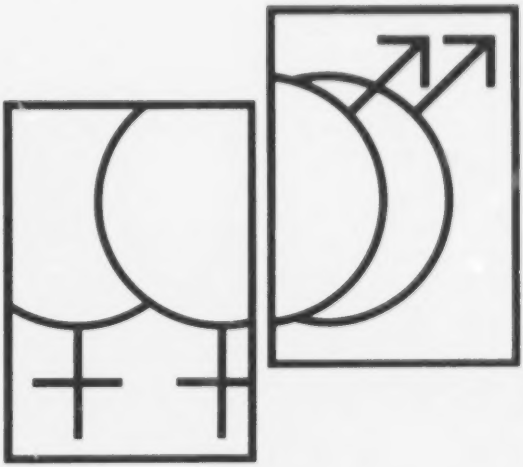
- Value one another's experiences, and think about how they have contributed to group members' thinking.

- Help to develop one another's ideas. Listen carefully and ask clarifying questions.

• Don't waste time arguing about points of fact; for the time being, you may need to agree to disagree and then move on. You might want to check out the facts before your next conversation.

• Anecdotal stories have value because they describe our experience and can help us understand what others have gone through. But they do not necessarily represent the real world accurately. Be careful not to overgeneralize from a story.

• Speak your mind freely, but don't monopolize the conversation.



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The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide: Civil Rights for Gays and Lesbians is designed to help you have more productive conversations about a difficult issue that many believe will become more prominent throughout the nineties. This booklet can be read quickly and discussed whenever you have the opportunity to talk. It is balanced in its presentation of ideas and helps people examine the public policy debate in light of their personal beliefs.

The Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC), producer of this Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide, is a project of the Topsfield Foundation, Inc., a nonprofit, nonpartisan foundation dedicated to advancing deliberative democracy and improving the quality of public life in the United States. SCRC carries out this mission by promoting the use of small-group, democratic, highly participatory discussions known as study circles.

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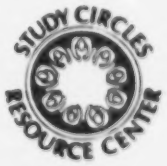

Organizing and Leading a Busy Citizen's Study Circle

A how-to-guide to accompany the Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides published by the Study Circles Resource Center, sponsored by Topsfield Foundation, Inc.

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Organizing and Leading a Busy Citizen's Study Circle is a how-to companion designed to accompany The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides. Each of the Guides provides a brief overview of a difficult issue facing our society, and each offers a balanced variety of viewpoints in a compact format. Contact the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) for a complete list of The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides.

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Publications of SCRC include topical discussion programs; training material for study circle organizers, leaders, and writers; a quarterly newsletter; a clearinghouse list of study circle material developed by a variety of organizations; and an annotated bibliography on study circles, collaborative learning, and participatory democracy. Many of these publications are available at no charge. Write or call for more information:

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Introduction

The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides are designed to enhance discussion in a variety of settings. When put to use in more informal settings - such as over a meal, during your commute, or after watching a relevant television show with friends or family - few guidelines are needed beyond the ground rules for useful discussion found at the end of each booklet. If, however, you are planning to use the booklets in a somewhat more structured conversation known as a "study circle," the guidelines in this booklet will help you plan a successful small-group discussion.

The strength of a study circle lies in bringing the wisdom of ordinary people to bear on difficult issues. Cooperation and participation are stressed so that the group can capitalize on the experience of all its members. A discussion leader helps ensure that all viewpoints are taken seriously and that each participant has an equal opportunity to participate.

The goal of a study circle is not to make the participants into experts, but rather to deepen their understanding and judgment by focusing on the values that underlie opinions. By carefully considering a range of views and experiences, group members "work through" difficult issues and grapple with the conflicts within themselves as well as among the group members. Finding some common ground can be an important goal for a study circle, especially when participants hold diverse views, but consensus and compromise are not necessary.

The remainder of this booklet contains recommendations for the study circle organizer and the discussion leader. These two roles, which can be performed by the same person, are central to the creation and success of a study circle.

By taking part in a study circle based on The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides, you will be part of the growing ranks of people in this country who are turning to thoughtful, challenging discussion as a first step in addressing the pressing issues of our time. The staff of the Study Circles Resource Center hopes you enjoy your study circle, and urges you to drop a line to let us know how you conducted your program and to provide feedback on The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides.

Organizing a study circle

The study circle organizer is the creator of a study circle. The organizer recruits the participants, chooses the study circle leader, and attends to the logistical details surrounding the group's meetings.

After determining that you'd like to organize a study circle based on The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide(s), you'll need to make some decisions regarding the number of meetings, their location, and their dates and times. Polling several potential participants can help you make these decisions, but in the end you will have to make these choices. Remember, no study circle organizer is able to satisfy everyone!

Friends, neighbors, co-workers, fellow students, members of the organizations to which you belong, and members of your congregation are all potential study circle participants. Bear in mind that the location you choose for the study circle meetings will, to a large extent, determine the potential pool of participants - and vice versa. Most study circles meet in evening sessions, but some find that early morning, lunch hour, or weekend gatherings are more convenient.

Ask potential participants to make a commitment to attend each session, not only for the sake of continuity, but also to create a high level of familiarity and comfort within the group. Be sure that participants receive their Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides - and any other articles or readings you wish to share with them - in advance of the first meeting.

Two-hour meetings work well for study circle discussions, and each of The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides can be the subject of one or several meetings. The quality of discussions often increases when participants meet several times: they'll have the opportunity to become better acquainted with each other, and time to mull over the topic of discussion.

You and the discussion leader should have a clear plan for the first meeting and suggestions for the remainder of the meetings, but you should solicit input from participants during that first meeting. Your local community's experience with the various topics addressed in the Guides may determine how many sessions everyone wants to devote to each topic.

When choosing a meeting place, look for a site that has minimal distractions and where participants can chat informally following the sessions. Someone's living room or a meeting room in an office or church are all appropriate places.

Choosing the leader may be the most important decision that the organizer makes. A bad leader can ruin a study circle and a good one can make it a wonderful experience. You'll want to find someone who can both keep the discussion on track and encourage participants to express their views.

Once the study circle actually begins, the organizer's role becomes secondary to the leader's. However, the organizer is in the best position to provide feedback to the leader and to detect and resolve any difficulties that arise. The leader can invite participants to spend the last few minutes of each meeting talking about what went well or what they'd like to change, but the most valuable feedback often comes up after the meeting breaks up.

These guidelines should help you off to a good start, but don't be afraid to modify them as you see fit. Every group's situation is unique, and study circle organizers are encouraged to adapt the basic format to their communities and organizations in whatever way is appropriate.

Leading a study circle

The discussion leader is the most important person in determining a study circle's success. It is the leader's responsibility to moderate the discussion by asking questions, identifying key points, and managing the group process. While doing all this, the leader should be friendly, understanding, and supportive.

The leader does not need to be an expert on the subject at hand. However, thorough familiarity with The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guide and previous reflection about the directions in which the discussion might go will make the leader more effective and more comfortable in this important role. This reflection should include highlighting questions from the guide that you plan to use, and perhaps writing down some other questions to keep on hand during the discussion.

The most difficult aspects of leading discussion groups include keeping discussion focused, handling aggressive participants, and keeping one's own ego at bay. A background of leading small-group discussions or meetings is helpful but not essential. The following suggestions and principles of group leadership will be useful even for experienced leaders.

- **Set a friendly and relaxed atmosphere from the start.**

- **Briefly review with participants the "Ground rules for useful discussions"** found at the back of each of The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides. This will help ensure that everyone understands the general tone of the discussion. In order to clarify your role you might say something like, "My role is to assist in keeping discussion focused and moving along. Your role is to listen carefully, share your ideas and concerns with other participants, and examine your own beliefs."

- **Be an active listener.** You will need to truly hear and understand what people say if you are to guide the discussion effectively. Listening carefully will set a good example for participants and will alert you to potential conflicts.

- **Stay neutral and be cautious about expressing your own values.** As the leader, you have considerable power with the group. That power should be used only for the purpose of furthering the

discussion and not for establishing the correctness of a particular viewpoint. Bear in mind that your role is not that of a teacher or lecturer.

• **Utilize open-ended questions.** Questions such as, "What other possibilities have we not yet considered?" will encourage discussion rather than elicit short, specific answers and are especially helpful for drawing out quiet members of the group.

• **Feel free to temporarily break up the study circle.** For example, when addressing a section of The Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides that lays out a range of viewpoints, try breaking the study

circle into smaller groups. Assign one of the viewpoints to each group. Ask each group to spend a few minutes preparing to present a viewpoint *in its best possible light* - a task that may entail considerable role playing. After the study circle reassembles, be sure to limit discussion of any one viewpoint so that each receives a fair hearing.

• **Draw out quiet participants.** Do not allow anyone to sit quietly or to be forgotten by the group. Create an opportunity for each participant to contribute. The more you know about each person in the group, the easier this will be.

• **Don't be afraid of pauses and silences.** People need time to think and reflect. Sometimes silence will help someone build up the courage to make a valuable point. Leaders who tend to be impatient may find it helpful to count silently to 10 after asking a question.

• **Do not allow the group to make you the expert or "answer person."** You should not play the role of final arbiter. Let the participants decide what they believe. Allow group members to correct each other when a mistake is made.

• **Don't always be the one to respond to comments and questions.** Encourage participants to question each other. When questions are addressed to you, try to deflect them back to other members of the group. In the best study circles, the discussion leader speaks less than anyone else in the room.

• **Don't allow the group to get hung up on unprovable "facts" or assertions.** Disagreements about basic facts are common for controversial issues. If there is debate over a fact or figure, ask the group if that fact is relevant to the discussion. In some cases, it is best to leave the disagreement unresolved and move on.

• **Do not allow the aggressive, talkative person or faction to dominate.** Doing so is a sure recipe for failure. One of the most difficult aspects of leading a discussion is restraining domineering participants. Don't let people call out and gain control of the floor. If you allow this to happen the aggressive will dominate, you may lose control, and the more polite people will become angry and frustrated.

• **Use conflict productively.** If the group holds relatively homogeneous views, you might try to invigorate the discussion by encouraging participants to play devil's advocate. But if discussion becomes heated, try to keep it focused on the point at hand. Don't allow participants to personalize their disagreements. Since everyone's opinion is important in a study circle, participants should feel safe saying what they really think - even if it's unpopular.

• **Beware of allowing a group to move from a personal experience to a broad generalization.** Anecdotal stories are valuable in moving from the abstract to the personal, but can do harm when participants overgeneralize from them.

• **Synthesize or summarize the discussion occasionally.** It is helpful to consolidate related ideas to provide a solid base for the discussion to build upon.

• **Ask hard questions.** Don't allow the discussion to simply confirm old assumptions. Avoid following any "line," and encourage

participants to re-examine their assumptions. Call attention to points of view that have not been mentioned or seriously considered, whether you agree with them or not.

• **Don't worry about attaining consensus.** It's good for the study circle to have a sense of where participants stand, but it's not necessary to achieve consensus. In some cases a group will be split; there's no need to hammer out agreement.

• **Provide a sense of closure as each session draws to an end.** You might ask a question that each participant may respond to in turn such as, "What have you learned in the past two hours?" or, "How have your views either changed or become clearer?" Or you might ask a question about the process such as, "What did you think went especially well with this session, and what would you like to do differently next time we meet?" Even if you don't ask a specific evaluation question, let participants know that you welcome their suggestions for future discussions.

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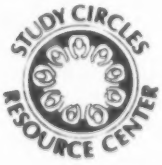

You may notice a discrepancy in prices for the Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides. Please note that prices are as follows:

Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides - $1.00 each, $0.75 each for 10 or more of the same title

Human Relations package (one each of the Busy Citizen's Discussion Guides on race relations, sexual harassment, and civil rights for gays and lesbians plus Organizing and Leading a Busy Citizen's Study Circle) - $3.50 per package, $2.50 per package for 10 or more

Regrettably, we will be unable to honor the booklet price of $.50 each except for very large orders.